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TAGS: PREL PGOV PINS NATO EU TU CY UK

SUBJECT: HMG CONCURS ABOUT TURKEY AND EU-NATO - WORRIES
ABOUT ISLAMICIZATION OF TURKISH MILITARY

REF: A. ANKARA 00461
B. NICOSIA 200

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Greg Berry for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C/NF) Summary. Drawing from points discussed ref A, Poloff solicited HMG's assessment of the role of Turkey in EU/NATO relations. Jason Moore of the Foreign Office's Turkey Section agreed with ref assessments and explicitly said HMG officials were tired of "hitting their heads against the brick wall" of Turkey's refusal to separate the Cypriot question from Turkey's NATO role. HMG agrees that the Cyprus situation is the "only" sticking point, but HMG is becoming much more pessimistic about a resolution to the Cypriot question given developments in both Nicosia and Ankara. Moore said that HMG believes the USG is the "only power" that possesses sufficient "leverage" with Turkey to obtain any movement on the NATO/EU issue. Yet HMG also believes that this leverage is based on a confident Turkish military, which HMG sees as becoming increasingly worried about its position in Turkish society. End summary.

Working Hard on Several Turkish Fronts

¶2. (C/NF) Moore said HMG has worked hard, via a number of different avenues, to have Turkey separate its hostility to the Cypriot government from its position on Turkey's role in NATO and NATO cooperation with the EU. But HMG has concluded further efforts are a waste of time without a solution in Cyprus -- the FCO is tired of "hitting their heads against that particular brick wall," Moore commented. HMG cannot, as a member of the EU, accept the Turkish position that a resolution to Cyprus' isolation is a condition for EU/NATO operations, but as a member of NATO cannot afford to alienate Turkey either. HMG has been a strong supporter of Turkey's membership in the EU, and has been very supportive of Turkey's complaint that Cyprus uses its status as an EU member to thwart Turkish efforts to join. On the other hand, Moore admitted that HMG is very aware of Turkey's willingness to take the same stand in reverse when the issue is EU/NATO cooperation. Only a Cyprus settlement will end this sophomoric behavior, Moore said.

But Resolution Soon is Unlikely

¶3. (C/NF) Recent developments in both Ankara and Nicosia, however, are discouraging for those seeking any solution soon, Moore said, although HMG remains officially optimistic. In Nicosia, problems within the Cypriot coalition indicate a possible turning away from a more flexible to a hard-line position (ref B). In Ankara, the continued strength of the pro-Islamist political parties and the parallel weakening of the prestige of the Turkish military, which HMG continues to believe is the bulwark of secularism in Turkish society, is likely to result in a more hard-line position from the Turkish side as well. HMG is concerned specifically that

their Turkish contacts are reporting that the military in Turkey is "running scared" over the "insidious" way that the Erdogan government has been able to "slip fundamentalists" into various ministries, including the Justice Ministry, and the military reportedly fears that it is next on this target list. If this were to occur, HMG believes the military would face an internal power struggle with unknown consequences for NATO and the EU, but it would almost definitely lead to a hard-line position on Cyprus.

¶4. (C/NF) Moore said that whatever has been achieved in joint EU/NATO operations with Turkey rarely has been "at a high level" and usually involves the exploitation of personal relationships built up between NATO allies over the years. HMG thinks this is the "only way forward for now" on EU/NATO cooperation. This kind of leverage is chiefly an asset "in the quiver" of the USG, whose military and political relations with Turkey are the strongest. Moore urges that these "schmoozings" and "arm-twistings" continue. Even here, however, HMG is very concerned that the Turkish military is not as confident as it used to be, the threat from the fundamentalists is sparking self-doubt within the military, and the fallout from the Ergenekon investigations have tainted the military's reputation. Without its traditional confidence, and weakened by both of these related developments, the Turkish military's ability to respond positively to USG "leverage" is weakened. "All in all, a discouraging set of circumstances," concluded Moore.

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